

Eastern U.P. Regional Planning & Development Commission Board Meeting
Wednesday, February 27, 2008
6:30 P.M.
Maple Ridge Restaurant, Eckerman, MI

Present: Rodney Richards, Chairman; Ward Pulfrey, Newberry; Dean Reid, Mackinac County; Greg Zimmerman, LSSU; Bill Ferguson, Whitefish Twp.; Mike Porter, EUP ISD; Brenda Cooper, Sault Tribe.

Guests present: Sue Bolwby, Anderson-Tackman; Wendy Malaska, Cloverland Electric Co-Op

Staff present: Jeff Hagan; Ellen Benoit; Nathan Fazer

Absent with regrets: Jim Hendricks; Earl Kay; Bernie LaJoie; Mike Patrick; Dawn Nelson

Meeting called to order by Chairman Richards at 6:03 p.m.

Minutes from the October 24, 2007 meeting were presented and reviewed, motion to approve the minutes as presented by B. Ferguson, supported by W. Pulfrey. Motion carried unanimously.

Sue Bowlby from Anderson-Tackman Accounting was present to review the 2007 Audit of the EUPRPDC's financial statements. Mrs. Bowlby recommended to the Board that the Commission formally adopt a "Fraud Policy", she will provide to staff some sample policies for review. Chairman Richards indicated that this item will be taken up at a future meeting.

Motion to accept the Audit report as given by B. Ferguson, supported by D. Reid, motion carried unanimously.

Ellen Benoit provided the Board with a financial report on the Commission's activities to date.

Motion to accept the financial report as given by M. Porter, supported by D. Reid, motion carried unanimously.

MCACA REPORT:

The MCACA program which supports local art projects with a grant program administered through our agency has \$21,300 to grant this year. One application was received in the first round and was fully funded at \$2,422, leaving \$18,878 for the second and final round for this year. The deadline for applications was February 1, 2008 for the second round. Nine applications were received for a total of \$26,085 in grant requests. The review meeting will be held March 4 to decide the funding distribution. The MCACA review panel is made up of 4 persons, 1 from each county and a tri-county or outside evaluator. There are several people from each county who volunteer on a rotating basis.

TRANSPORTATION REPORT:

Director Hagan provide an update on the Transportation Planning work program; activities are proceeding as planned, Nathan is working with the Road Commissions on updating road names for the framework map, which will then be submitted back to the Center for Geographic

Information, in the past we have provided updates through the RoadSoft program used for Asset Management, however, CGI cannot really keep up with the changes as provided statewide, my suggestion was that perhaps we could “clean up” the road names database within our Region and provide this information back to CGI, they apparently, thought this was a great idea, Nathan is going to begin working on it this quarter with each of the Road Commission, N. Fazer elaborated a bit on the process.

Board suggested that staff attend the MTA chapter meetings when they are held this spring to discuss this project.

HERITAGE ROUTE:

Director Hagan reported on Heritage Route activities since the last Board meeting - Since the official designation of the Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage Route last November, we were informed that we obtained a partial award from our Scenic Byways application to do interpretive kiosks and marketing of the route, the award is in the amount of \$74,597, roughly \$25,000 will be spent on the construction and development of interpretive kiosks and the necessary information to display on the kiosks, benches and picnic tables, this will be a cooperative effort, with DNR assisting us in the design of the panels and the installation. The sites are being developed as a “pack-out” meaning they will result in little to no maintenance. Panels for the kiosks will be constructed of maintenance free and vandal resistant material. We partnered with the Great Waters nature tourism alliance on this grant and the remainder of the money will be spent on developing electronic media kits, an interactive website, conservation education, and marketing and promotion of the Heritage Route.

We continue to pursue the designation of M-134 as a Heritage Route and once that group is ready to proceed (estimated next 60 days or so) we will provide technical assistance to them in the development of their Corridor Management Plan.

SSM/SOO TWP. ACCESS MANAGEMENT STUDY:

Wilcox and Associates continues work on the Access Management Study for the City of SSM and Soo Twp., at our February 20th team meeting we were presented with the first three chapters in draft format of the study. Focus primarily has been on conflict points within the study area, land use analysis, project future development areas and potential treatment measures. Local Access Management team will continue to meet monthly throughout the development of the Study.

NORTH HURON SCENIC PATHWAY:

Director Hagan reported to the board that pre-engineering study is nearly complete. The steering committee is currently awaiting the draft version of the narrative; sketch panels and draft landscape renderings have been provided to the Steering Committee. We anticipate the project will wrap-up by the end of March.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAM:

Staff member Fazer provided an update to the board on the Asset Management program for 2008.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM:

Director Hagan informed the Board that the contract with the MEDC was renewed for 2008 to provide Technical Assistance to communities with eligible Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects, the budget for this program was cut by 3%, and we were also informed that this contract will be eliminated in 2009, thus, we have renewed our efforts to engage our state legislators to help us fight for the continuation of the Technical Assistance contracts, as we did last October. Many of our constituents in the EUP drafted letters of support on behalf of the project. In the opinion of the Director, this decision does not make any sense; to have MEDC dispatch staff from Lansing to come up here and scout out potential projects, when they could continue to pay us a nominal amount to do the same work. Director Hagan reiterated that he does not feel the reasoning provided by our program manager is legitimate and that other state agencies need this money, we are talking about less than \$100,000 annually to cover the entire Upper Peninsula. Over the past 10 years we have received an average of \$25,000 to provide technical assistance; this has resulted in over \$30 million in local, state, federal and private investment in economic development projects!

Non-Motorized Trail Investment Plans

The Superior Region Road and Trail Guide Map was a project that was completed last year. Taking that a step further, MDOT has decided to have the regions use that information and develop a Regional Non-Motorized Trail Investment Strategy Plan which MDOT, road commissions, and local groups can use for future trail and bicycling route development. The plan will provide funding sources and goals and objectives.

To start the process the EUPRP&DC is creating a questionnaire which will be distributed at the Sault Area Spring Show and Mackinac County Home Shows in April. We will also hold a Trail Summit meeting later on in the summer as well as community meetings to gather information. This program will be on-going for the next 2 years.

Solid Waste –

It appears that we have obtained the required 67% approval at each level of government (county/local), awaiting copies of the McMillan and Lakefield Twp. resolutions and then we will submit the Amended plan to DEQ for approval. Once approved we'll schedule a meeting of the Solid Waste Planning Committee and invite Republic Waste Services to come and discuss their short term and long range plans in Mackinac County.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – JEFF HAGAN:

Farm Bill Update – last fall the Senate passed its version of the Farm Bill, which included an important piece of funding for rural areas, in the amount of \$135 in mandatory funds over the next five years for the Rural Collaborative Investment Program (RCIP). Information on this program is included in your packets. It appears that this program will be administered by USDA Rural Development, but that the Regional Commission could have an integral role as the fiscal manager of the funds that could flow into the Region.

GREAT LAKES SHIPWRECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

Prior to our previously scheduled Commission meeting I was contacted by Tom Farnquist at the GLSHS, requested a letter of support from the Regional Commission for their 2002 Human Use/Natural Resource Management Plan for Whitefish Point, apparently Rep. Stupak passed a bill supporting it, but Senator Levin has requested various interested parties to sign off on letters of support, we were approached due to our involvement in the 1992 Comprehensive Plan for the Point. The Land Patents also only recognize this 1992 Plan and not the more current and updated 2002 Plan. I enlisted the help of John Campbell and we both reviewed the 2002 Plan and the 1992 Plan, as well as the 2008 Building Use Plan. Overall the 2002 Plan calls for the creation of a Joint Committee including representatives from MAS, GLSHS and the USFWS, this committee would provide a substantial increase in oversight on any developments at the point, compared to the previous arrangement. As this Committee is deemed the ultimate authority for implementing the 2002 Plan. In addition, these parties all understand that they are subject to the provisions of a valid township zoning ordinance. The only concerns that we raised had to do with parking, the 2008 Building Use Plan calls for significant impacts to the current parking, which has always been an issue, however, the Plan does not specifically identify where parking might be relocated, so, too that end, if it is outside of the historic site, it would not be under the authority of the Joint Committee.

I requested input from the board on this and received a few emails and phone calls; as a result I drafted and submitted a letter supporting the 2002 Human Use/Natural Resource Management Plan based upon the analysis above. It is not known at this time if or when Senator Levin will take this measure up again.

OTHER BUSINESS:

RESOLUTION OPPOSING COMMERCE CENTERS BILL

I would ask that the board take up the resolution I have drafted opposing the House Bill #4105 – Commerce Centers. This bill is biased towards metropolitan areas and big cities and does nothing to truly assist smaller or rural communities. In addition it calls for very unrealistic requirements of any community wishing to apply for designation. For these reasons I would request the commission oppose this Bill in the form of the following resolution. Motion to approve the resolution as presented in opposition of H.B. 4105 by D. Reid, supported by M. Porter, resolution passed unanimously.

BIO-FUELS DISCUSSION: D. Reid reported to the board that bio-fuels keep resources and jobs local and he see's a role for the Regional Commission to play in the development of bio-fuels, whether it be a feasibility study, preliminary report, etc. Also reported on the Bio-economy in Sweden, per a conference he attended in Escanaba; Sweden obtains 21% of their energy from renewable sources, CHP plants.

D. Reid also updated the commission on the Emerald Ash Borer situation in Mackinac County – at the current time no Ash can leave the County; this could affect Chippewa/Luce Counties.

Next meeting date: April 30th, 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn the EUPRPDC Board meeting by G. Zimmerman, supported by B. Ferguson, meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.